for an Independent and Socialist QUEBEC

Foreword

"For an Independent Socialist Quebec" is the text of a resolution adopted by the convention of the League for Socialist Action-Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière, which met in Toronto, September 1970.

The LSA-LSO is a pan-Canadian organization uniting revolutionary socialists in Quebec and English Canada.

Close to 250 delegates and observers attended the 1970 convention of the LSA/ LSO.

Barely one month after the convention ended, the federal Liberal government headed by Pierre Elliot Trudeau, taking advantage of the confusion and disarray in the left provoked by the terrorist kidnapping of a British diplomat and the Quebec labor minister, sent 10,000 federal troops into Quebec and invoked the War Measures Act, jailing 450 leading militants of the left and nationalist movements. About one-tenth of these were subsequently brought to trial on trumped-up charges of seditious conspiracy and membership in, or aid of, the now-outlawed Front de Libération du Québec.

The War Measures crisis and subsequent developments are confirming in striking fashion the validity and relevance of the analysis developed in the following document on the national liberation struggle in Quebec.

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For an Independent Socialist Quebec

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The developing struggle for *un Québec français*

Since the 1968 convention of the revolutionary socialists in Canada — the Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière/ League for Socialist Action — the developing liberation movement in Quebec has continued to deepen and broaden. The profoundly revolutionary character of Québécois nationalism that we analyzed in the 1968 document, *Vive le Québec Libre/Vers La Libération du Québec,* has been confirmed again and again.

A powerful nationalist upsurge has extended deep into the ranks of the urban working class, the vast majority of the Québécois population, taking form notably around the massive mobilizations in defense of the French language and the development of mass sentiment for an independent Quebec.

In 1968 we noted that "national consciousness has given new dimensions to the class struggle." The distinct tempo of the Quebec struggle is revealed in militant labor conflicts marked by the most radical forms of action, including sit-ins and even armed workers defense guards.

The powerful student movement has repeatedly mobilized, descending *en masse* into the streets and taking over the schools, advancing demands based on the revolutionary concept that

educational institutions should serve not the capitalist ruling class but the national liberation struggle of the oppressed workers and farmers of Quebec.

Less than two months after the 1968 convention pledged our full support to the movement to make French the "sole official language," the occupation of Aimé Renaud school in St-Léonard brought the struggle for unilingualism to a head. The election there of a pro-unilingual school board headed by members of the Mouvement pour l'Intégration Scolaire (MIS—Movement for School Integration) followed by the rapid formation of MIS sections throughout Montreal island and in other areas of the nation, raised the language question — the clearest manifestation of Quebec's domination by foreign capital — to the level of a direct political confrontation with the bourgeois parties in the National Assembly. The revolutionary, anticapitalist dynamic of the demand for a ˝Québec français has exposed the total unwillingness of both the old and the newer bourgeois nationalist parties to meet the program of this mass movement: the Union Nationale government charged MIS leader Raymond Lemieux with "sedition," while Parti Québécois leader René Lévesque has several times felt obliged to denounce the movement, to the dismay of many of his supporters.

The language question has become a powerful issue in the trade unions, which for several years have campaigned to make French the language of work. The Confederation of National Trade Unions (CNTU) officially supports unilingualism, as does the 60,000-member teachers union in principle; the demand for a French-only Quebec provoked the biggest debate at the most recent convention of the Quebec Federation of Labor (AFL-CIO-CLC [Canadian Labor Congress]), and won support of nearly half the delegates.

The struggle for unilingualism has introduced and popularized other key aspects of the revolutionary socialist program. When the massive demonstrations against Bill 63 (a government motion to legitimize English school privileges) culminated in a massive protest march of over 40,000 on Quebec last autumn, the contrast between the popular mood reflected by the crowd outside and the treasonous actions of the hundred or so deputies inside the chamber prompted some leaders of the movement to speak of the crowd as "another parliament" that alone truly represented the Québécois.

The LSO (Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière) intervened actively in the struggle and correctly attempted to give content to this dual power concept by posing the idea of a general strike.

The mass march for a "McGill Français" in March 1969, when federal troops were prepared for action for the first time in recent years (they were used directly in last fall's

Montreal police strike), centered around the demand that this bastion of English privilege and reaction be transformed into a French university which would put all its immense resources and research facilities to the service of the Québécois, rather than the giant imperialist corporations which now rape the resources of the nation.

This concept of an educational system which serves the revolution — often termed the "red university" — was actually implemented in the boldest fashion during the massive upsurge of fall 1968 when over 50,000 students, the bulk of Quebec's junior college enrollment, occupied their CEGEPs (Collèges d'Enseignement Générale et Professionelle — junior colleges) — an upsurge that in North America is equaled in scope only by the U.S. antiwar upsurge on the campuses this last spring.

Creating action committees on the model of the French May-June events, the students operated the colleges and schools for three weeks, utilizing their facilities to produce newspapers, posters, leaflets and to conduct courses on revolutionary thought. The CEGEP occupiers' slogan of "worker-student solidarity" (also adopted from France) was given content by the remarkable sympathy manifested by non-student forces, in the first place the trade unions, behind their bold actions. A forceful intervention in this movement by the modest forces of the Ligue des Jeunes Socialistes and the LSO won some of the best activists in the upsurge to our movement and to the ideas of revolutionary socialism. These forces were in turn doubled during the successful intervention of the LSO and LJS in the Bagot by-election campaign, when we ran a candidate against the Quebec minister of education.

The wave of repression unleashed by the authorities against the student movement following the decline of the occupations revealed their awareness of the revolutionary response the students' action threatened to provoke in

other layers of Quebec's unstable society. This society badly lacks the job outlets and opportunities required to absorb the skills and aptitudes of the graduates pouring from the vastly expanded educational structures of recent years.

Although the revolt has erupted first at this, the most vulnerable point, other struggles indicate the possibilities for revolutionary combat which already exist in the Quebec working class. The militancy of Quebec labor struggles has been shown many times over — the protests against the Murray Hill limousine monopoly, the Lapalme Transport workers fight for their jobs, the militant teachers struggles, including the demonstration of 20,000 teachers at Quebec City last year, etc.

In several instances, workers have protested industrial closures or threats of closure by occupying their plants (Davies Shipbuilding, Vickers, Domtar). During a strike at the company towns of East Angus and Windsor, paper mill workers occupied a plant and armed themselves against vigilante attacks by company-hired guards. The Montreal police strike last October 7, 1969, revealed how the explosive contradictions of Quebec society have even put a question mark over the reliability for the bourgeoisie of their trained agents of repression. The largely spontaneous outpourings of nationalist revolt in the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day demonstrations of recent years are another indication of the explosive potential of the developing national consciousness, particularly among the youth.

L'indépendantisme becomes a mass phenomenon

The growing social ferment in Quebec society, itself a product of the national oppression of the Québécois, has found its natural expression in a progressively deepening disillusionment with the constitutional status quo among all sectors of opinion. Today, after many years of endless federal-provincial conferences, ultimatums and royal commissions, there is less talk of constitutional "reform," much more talk of separation and the need for an independent state of Quebec which can plan the economy in the interests of the Québécois.

Independentist feeling is spurred by a worsening economic conjuncture which has underlined Quebec's vulnerable position in the Canadian and North American capitalist economy. In periods of relative prosperity, un-

employment is higher and wages lower in Quebec than elsewhere; and economic downturns increase the social inequality of the Québécois many times over.

The struggle to defend the French language has sharpened enormously as a result of industrialization, urbanization, a considerable fall in the birth rate among French Québécois, and heavy postwar immigration which swells the English school system. The strong, almost unanimous independentist sentiment among the Québécois students is directly linked with an expansion in educational structures during the last decade which has multiplied the student population without any corresponding increase in job opportunities.

The growing support for *l'indépendantism* (this is the word favored by Québécois nationalists, who consider "separatism" a pejorative term) is profoundly revolutionary. It signifies above all a collective disillusionment in the capacity of the existing legal and political structures — and by implication, the *social* structures which they consecrate — to overcome the national inequality; and it denotes a deep desire for a radical change from top to bottom in the entire political structure. This is the essential revolutionary dynamic of the national consciousness.

So far this profound nationalist feeling has politically been reflected most directly in the refracted mirror of petit-bourgeois opinion – the decision of the États Généraux in favor of independence, the splits of nationalist currents from the established pro-federalist bourgeois and petit-bourgeois parties (Liberals and Ralliement des Créditistes) and the successive dissolution and regrouping of petit-bourgeois independentist currents which finally resulted in the first unified independentist party— the Parti Québécois (PQ). The working class, which has not yet risen to political being through its own mass party, has yet to develop fully its program for national emancipation.

But the strong showing of the PQ in its first electoral test in April 1970 dramatically underscored the growing strength of independentist feeling among the working class. The PQ received close to 25 per cent of the popular vote — the support of one in three Francophone Québécois, and about half the industrial workers in Montreal.

The vote for the PQ could be considered the complement of the mass extra-parliamentary struggles which have shaken the Quebec nation. The main issue behind those mobilizations — the language question — tends by its very logic to raise the demand for a vast extension of the authority of the Quebec state, which is responsible for education and cultural affairs. The evidence from the polls showing a relatively high concern among PQ voters in such social issues as education, unemployment and housing also indicates that insofar as the class defines its social objectives, they are formulated in an independentist framework. Similar tendencies have been remarked many times in the case of the student movement — often, the bellweather for indicating the path of radicalization in the working class. The significance of the conjunction of social and national demands was metaphorically summarized many years ago by Leon Trotsky when he observed that the separatism of the Catalan workers and peasants in Spain was "the envelope of their social indignation."

The entirely progressive thrust of national consciousness toward a mass sentiment for independence opens a new, advanced stage in the Quebec struggle, a stage of great revolutionary significance.

Two years ago we had reason to believe that the struggle would proceed in another direction. We said: "The political independence of French Canada stands as an historic alternative, which cannot be approved or rejected except in terms of given social conditions at a given time. At this time, there are no grounds to believe that the working class, by adopting the program of political independence, would advance its interests in any way, in terms either of its present class consciousness or of its ultimate objective of defeating the power of the monopolies politically buttressed by the Ottawa regime."

We noted that "no tendency of the Quebec labor movement has adopted an independentist program," and questioned whether there is "such a gap in the level and direction of the class struggle in Quebec and in English Canada that the workers struggle could be advanced by orienting to political independence from English Canada." The Quebec working class, we observed, "is already beginning to move along the lines of independent political action . . . the general motion toward a labor party is now becoming clear." We suggested that "the projected party could well in fact be formed as a constituent part of the NDP (New Democratic Party)."

The powerful upsurge of nationalism and its militant repercussions in the labor and student movements have confirmed our understanding that *national* consciousness — awareness of their oppression and exploitation as a nation — would play a key role in the development of *class* consciousness among the Québécois workers. But contrary to the perspectives we traced in 1968, the development of political consciousness has proceeded through the growth of independentist sentiment and has veered from the road of independent labor political action to take a detour through the Parti Québécois, a bourgeois party.

Confronted by this new situation, the revolutionary socialists are obliged to go beyond defense of the right of the Québécois nation to self-determination, to put forward now the demand for an independent and socialist Quebec. The League must undertake a major turn in its work, toward the emerging nationalist movement. We must aim at nothing less than to gain the leadership of the national struggle around the only program guaranteeing an independent Quebec, the program of revolutionary socialism.

Two aspects in particular of this new development must be analyzed: first, the precise character and revolutionary significance of the new mass movement for independence; and second, why the nationalist thrust has gone toward the Parti Québécois and what the emergence of the PQ means for the future development of the struggle.

The desire for an independent state has been a recurring theme throughout Quebec's political history, particularly since the British conquest of 1760 which transposed a national form onto the developing class conflicts within the former French colony. The nascent French-Canadian bourgeoisie who played the leading role in the events culminating in the 1837-1838 armed rebellion in Lower Canada made clear that they aimed to establish a sovereign state — the political expression of the French-speaking "Canadian nation" — on the banks of the St. Lawrence. (This separatist objective in no way inhibited these early revolutionaries from collaborating closely with their co-thinkers in Upper Canada, accepting, for example, the proposal of William Lyon Mackenzie for an eventual *federation* of states, with a mutual sharing of powers in communications, immigration and land concessions.)

The defeat of their bid for power in 1837-1838 and the confirmation of the hegemony of the English-Canadian bourgeoisie through Confederation in 1867, confined the social base of the French Canadian petit-bourgeoisie to

independent small enterprise and the rural economy, and later, with the penetration and expansion of the imperialist sector, to the role of urban subcontractors and managerial satraps in the private corporations and provincial civil service.

Their nationalism developed a conservative, particularist orientation centered around participation in the pan-Canadian political structures while defining French Canada as a nation possessing the right to autonomy (but not self-determination) with respect only to powers affecting its cultural and narrowly national rights. This remained the prevailing expression of French-Canadian nationalism as it was articulated in Quebec political life until well after the Second World War.

If this "cultural autonomism" reflected above all the ideology of a defeated bourgeoisie, the entire population tended to mobilize around nationalist themes wherever tensions between the dominant English-Canadian nation and. the oppressed French-Canadian nation boiled over in crises mobilizing the broad masses, both rural and urban, of French Canada — Riel, the Manitoba schools, Boer war, the conscription crises of First and Second World Wars, etc. At times it took a separatist form, as in 1917 when a motion to separate was debated in Quebec's legislative assembly.

But the independentist *movement* as such is a relatively recent phenomenon which developed during the. 1960s, and only during the last year or so became a mass movement drawing into its ranks thousands of industrial workers as well as students, clerical and professional layers.

For revolutionary socialists, the overwhelming evidence that the thrust of Quebec politics today is toward independence has enormous progressive significance. The clear evolution of working-class sentiment toward support for political independence answers an important question which has for some time been posed in the Quebec left.

Every nationalism revolves around concepts which are in form common to all classes in the nation: nation, language, territory, etc. But each class within the nation injects its own social content into its nationalist program. The bourgeoisie, for example, primarily interested in ensuring its freedom to control the market, emphasizes demands for territorial integrity and a standing army to protect it; political institutions like parliament to ensure its

political hegemony; and cultural institutions like a state religion to reinforce its ideological domination. It advances the demand for a national state categorically because for it a national state is the necessary condition for its full development as a ruling class.

The petit-bourgeoisie, insofar as it poses demands distinct from those of the bourgeoisie, stresses democratic objectives like the universal vote and free education, designed to extend the rights of citizenship to all classes of the nation, in the first place to the petit-bourgeoisie.

The workers are the most consistent defenders of democracy, and so they naturally support the democratic demands cited above. But they go further by raising demands such as freedom of trade union organization aimed at increasing their power to organize as a class independent of the bourgeois state. Because they as yet lack their own political party, the Quebec workers have not yet articulated a fully developed program of national demands; this will only take shape as the class organizes independently on the political arena. But already a number of nationalist demands have been formulated by the trade union movement — such as the demand that French be made the sole language of work, the language of collective bargaining and contracts, and on the shop floor; and the demand for wage parity of Quebec workers with workers in neighboring Ontario.

Today, the period of deepening imperialist crisis ushered in by the Russian revolution and aggravated by another world war, increasing competition from the expanding sector of workers states, and the development of the colonial revolution since the second world war, is characterized by the decreasing ability of the national bourgeoisie in the oppressed dependent capitalist nation to play any sort of independent role vis-à-vis imperialism; by the increased absolute and strategic weight of the working class in the political life of those nations and the necessity for this proletariat to take on many of the tasks traditionally assigned to the capitalist class of a "normal" developing bourgeois state, including the tasks of national liberation; and by the reappearance of powerful nationalist movements among oppressed nationalities and nations in the developed imperialist countries of Europe and North America where the vast majority of the population is working class.

In Quebec all three tendencies have come into focus simultaneously in a conjunctural period of deepening economic crisis of the North American capitalist economy.

The right of self-determination

The workers party defends unconditionally the democratic *right* to self-determination for all oppressed nations, up to and including their right to separate. But whether socialists in an oppressed nation like Quebec should demand political independence depends on how we see the direction of the struggle unfolding, and above all on whether the mass of the population in the oppressed nation shows a clear inclination to mobilize in support of the demand for political independence in its struggle for national emancipation.

Where the struggle is clearly orienting toward political independence, the international workers party has always been the foremost defender of the independence movement. Thus Marx, for example, was an early and forceful advocate of independence for Ireland, and held that the English workers would never be free until Ireland had achieved its independence from the British Crown. His views were carried forward by James Connolly who built a working-class independence movement in the early years of this century around the slogan "For a Workers Republic of Ireland." Today, the upsurge of the nationalist movement for independence in the North confirms the correctness of the Marx-Connolly position.

In a number of more recent instances, Trotsky, building on the traditions and experience of the Bolsheviks in Russia, considered the demand for political independence in the program of the workers party. He proposed that in Spain the proletarian vanguard should adopt the slogan of separation for Catalonia if the Catalonian masses should indicate that they wished to separate, either "by means of a free plebiscite, or by an assembly of representatives of Catalonia, or by the influential parties followed by the Catalonian masses, or finally by a Catalan national revolt." (Leon Trotsky, *Écrits 1928*-1940, Tome III [Publications de la Quatrième Internationale, Paris, *1959],* page *408.)* Similarly, he raised the demand for a united, free and *independent* workers and peasants Ukraine in 1939, on the basis of his understanding that "the broad masses of the Ukrainian people wish to separate from the USSR." ("Independence of the Ukraine and Sectarian Muddleheads," *Fourth International, Vol. 10 [December, 1949].)*

When we formulated our approach to the issue of separatism in 1968 on the basis of these general considerations, we had no reason to believe that (as we stated) "To adopt the program of separation of Quebec from English

Canada" would "advance the overall struggle." We noted that the existing independentist movement had failed to win support or much interest from workers; that no significant sector of the labor movement supported *l'indépendantism;* and that on the contrary, "the strong roots of the NDP in Quebec and the association of the majority of the organized working class in Quebec with the Canadian Labor Congress provide evidence of Quebec labor's awareness of the great benefits to be gained for its struggle by allying itself with the organized forces of the English Canadian working class, in a common struggle against the federal state."

This assessment, correct two years ago, has since been decisively invalidated by the actual course of development of the working class and its organizations. The objective political thrust of the struggle remains, of course, against the imperialist oppression of the Canadian bourgeois and their central state apparatus. But rather than move toward a closer alliance with English-Canadian workers and participation in a unified pan-Canadian labor party, the Quebec workers struggle has increasingly developed its own national tempo.

The Quebec Federation of Labor (QFL), while continuing its formal support for the federal NDP, has refused to endorse the NDP on the Quebec (national) level, and continues to press for autonomy within the Canadian Labor Congress. Despite continuing internecine conflict in the construction trades sector, the major trade union federations — the QFL, the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CNTU) and the Corporation des Enseignants du Québec, the teachers union — have drawn closer together over distinctly Quebec issues, including joint political action initiatives at the municipal level. The unification of these labor bodies into one Quebec-wide federation of over 600,000 members — half the size of the Canadian Labor Congress — has become a realizable goal.

The backdrop to these developments has been a qualitative increase in support for *l'indépendantism* in the labor movement. The teachers union, like the CNTU, supports unilingualism and a large majority of its membership is said to support the PQ. A significant section of the QFL bureaucracy publicly identified with the PQ during the recent election campaign; and the Montreal Council of the CNTU, which formally supported the NDP in the 1968 federal election, voted to endorse the PQ in 1970.

As for the NDP, the developments since 1968 have put a serious question mark over its future in Quebec. The decision by the NDP's founding convention in 1961 to recognize the bi-national character of the Canadian state, and even to make significant gestures toward Quebec's right to self-determination, fostered hopes that the party would succeed in linking up with the new generation of Quebec radicals, and sink roots in the labor movement. However, the NDP has steadily retreated from even the modest concessions of 1961, and in the recent Quebec elections, campaigned openly as a "federalist" anti-separatist" party. It received an average of slightly over 200 votes in each of fourteen ridings it contested.

As long as there is no independentist party on the federal level, the NDP may continue to serve as an electoral vehicle for reformist demands on the Ottawa government without, however, building a serious organization in Quebec. The initiative for independent political action in Quebec will not come from the NDP, nor can we see it playing any major role in the formation of the mass workers party.

The workers demand for independence is profoundly revolutionary in that it puts forward the concept that Quebec must be developed in terms of the needs of the Québécois. The logic of this demand is for a workers and farmers government which will take over the foreign capitalist monopolies that dominate and exploit Quebec, and will operate these industries under socialist planning. Why then has this powerful independentist sentiment taken the path of the PQ, and not a labor party with an anticapitalist perspective?

There is no doubt that the failure of the NDP and pan-Canadian labor leadership to relate sympathetically to Québécois nationalism as it developed throughout the 1960s is a primary reason why this nationalist thrust was channeled toward the PQ. But this explanation is in turn linked with another aspect of Quebec's particularity — the distinctive path of development which has characterized its working class.

A new working class

Quebec's industrialization in the first half of this century, and particularly during and since the second world war, produced many changes in its class structures which have only gradually and belatedly found expression in its politics. Most significant was the rapid creation of a large urban working class thrust suddenly from the parochial, traditional life of farm, village and town into the cities, in the first place Montreal, there to come face to face with the fact that control and administration of industry are largely in the hands of foreigners with alien culture, customs, and above all an alien language.

Quebec's French-speaking proletariat was formed almost entirely through internal migration, the transition from rural petit-bourgeois to urban proletarian milieu occurring quickly and sharply over only one or at most two generations. This is a major source of Québécois militancy. In English Canada, immigration of politically experienced workers from overseas played a crucial role in shaping the early radical thinking and subsequent political evolution of the workers. In contrast, the Québécois proletariat, largely cut off from contact with European socialism, lacks even the tradition of the French revolution which took place after the Conquest, and is still very new, with few distinctive traditions.

While this explains the relative political immaturity of Québécois workers, it also has a very positive side. Insulated from the pernicious influences of British Fabianism and German social democratic pragmatism — the back-side of the European socialist tradition — the Québécois are confronted with the possibility of leaping from reactionary Catholicism, already largely discredited, to the most advanced ideas of revolutionary Marxism.

If industrialization has created a powerful working class, for the Québécois petit-bourgeoisie which had dominated the parties and governments of Quebec, it has been a devastating

experience. Its traditional rural base, which afforded this class a certain measure of stability, has been utterly destroyed, with the remnants passing into the urban proletariat, particularly during and after the second world war.

During the last thirty years, a new urban petit-bourgeoisie has developed based on managerial strata in the subsidiaries of imperialist corporations or their satellite industries, or in the provincial state apparatus which has expanded to service those industries. In the private sector the chances of a French Canadian rising to the top of the managerial hierarchy are very restricted; and this layer in its lower levels is in constant danger of assimilation into the upper layers of the working class. (A large proportion of the students in the new universities are, of course, confronted with this fate immediately upon graduation, regardless of their level of academic training.) Thus the apparatus of the provincial state offers them their only chance to gain even an illusion of playing any independent role. It is among these layers that we find the origins of the PQ.

In the postwar period, capitalist investment in Quebec poured increasingly into secondary "transformation" industries designed to process for subsequent export the resources of the primary sector in which foreign control was already heavily concentrated. This relatively sophisticated new type of industry required a vast expansion in provincial government services, including state subsidies and social measures aimed at producing a skilled and reasonably healthy work force — educational reform, state medical insurance, pensions, etc.

The expansion in the powers of the provincial state provided jobs for an increasing number of young professionally-trained French Canadians. It began, in fact, in the mid-1950s under Duplessis and the Union Nationale, the party which most faithfully represented the interests of the rural-based petty bourgeoisie, and it was accompanied by growing Quebec demands for increased taxation power.

The accession to office in 1960 of the urban petty bourgeoisie through the Liberal Party was accompanied in following years with a further escalation of

Quebec's fiscal demands, passage of a few social measures including a belated but deep-going education reform, and creation of a number of state institutions designed to supplement and participate in the capitalist expansion [Hydro-Québec, Sidbec (Sidérurgie du Québec, a "mixed-capital" iron and steel complex), Société Générale de Financement (General Investment Corporation, government subsidies to private and "mixed" capital), Caisse de Dépôts et de Placements (Deposits and Investments Fund, mainly Quebec government pension premiums), etc.] By 1964-1965 the Quebec government's structures had been "modernized" to fully correspond to the new imperialist economic structures. Although these "reforms" were accompanied by a certain amount of nationalist rhetoric, they in no way violated the imperialist interests, either English-Canadian or American.

But in the process, there developed a sector of the petit-bourgeoisie centered among the technocrats of the provincial government bureaucracy, the state enterprises and the professional faculties of the universities, who saw their fate linked with the extension of powers of the Quebec state. Increasingly frustrated with the Lesage government's efforts after 1964 to put the brakes on constitutional and fiscal reform, they were more and more attracted to *l'indépendantism* as the solution to their plight. But they lacked a base of support in the population to move out independent of the traditional bourgeois parties.

The visit of French president Charles de Gaulle to Quebec in the summer of 1967 may be said to have marked a turning point. The massive enthusiastic response to his call "Vive le Québec Libre" indicated for the first time that wide layers of the population, including significant sectors of the working class, were receptive to the independentist message. Within three months René Lévesque had broken with the Liberals and with him went a small section of the party. They went on to establish in quick succession the Mouvement Souveraineté-Association, and later — in alliance with the existing separatist currents and a nationalist breakaway from the rural-based right wing Social Credit Party—to found the separatist Parti Québécois.

The key element in the PQ program was, of course, its demand for a sovereign state of Quebec endowed with all the powers of any "normal" (capitalist) government, as the necessary instrument of the emancipation of the Québécois.

But if the Quebec petty bourgeoisie has turned to *l'indépendantism* to

express its frustration at its own instability and vulnerability as a class, and its impossible desire, latent or overt, to play an independent role in economic and political life, the main significance of the PQ is that for the first time very significant sectors of the new urban proletariat in Quebec have supported a party that presented the solution to their national oppression in terms of political independence.

That this sympathy is based on the PQ's *l'indépendantism*, rather than any social "reforms" it may offer, is also demonstrated by the fate of the New Democratic Party, which in this election offered itself as a non-independentist, pro-federalist reform party. The NDP was a negligible factor in the election results, despite favorable press publicity — while the PQ swept many working-class polls. It would be ludicrous to suppose that after mobilizing in militant anticapitalist struggles which on occasion projected such far-reaching concepts as student control of the universities and workers control of industry, the Quebec workers flocked to the polls to choose a bourgeois party over a workers party. No, they voted consciously for *l'indépendantism.* And the converse of this is that because of its *indépendantism* they did not see the PQ as a bourgeois party!

The petit-bourgeois nature of the Parti Québécois

Nevertheless a clear definition of the class character of the Parti Québécois is of the utmost importance in determining the future course of development of the party and of the elements presently in sympathy with it. Decisive here is its program, its leadership, its origins and its political record.

Everything about this party indicates its thoroughly bourgeois character, its role as an obstacle in the path of the working class. Its program is the most frankly pro-capitalist of all Quebec parties. The modest social reforms it advocates are all perfectly consistent with the requirements of a "streamlined" capitalism: reform of the tax structures to take the load off declining rural sources of fiscal revenues; free education to ensure a plentiful supply of skilled labor for the imperialist conglomerates and the state apparatus; a full program of state-operated medical insurance services as part of the capitalist state's increasing assumption of the costs of reproduction of the work force.

The PQ's equivocation on "cultural rights," the touch-stone for any nationalist party, flows from its overriding desire to collaborate with, not combat, English-speaking capital. While it demands that French be made the "sole official language," it specifically opposes a unilingual school system by urging that "Quebec should recognize the school rights of the English minority . . . from elementary school to university."

The separation and "sovereignty" it advocates are consistently modeled after examples of a "cold" separation in the capitalist and neocolonialist framework: Norway from Sweden, 1905; Hungary from Austria, 1918; Pakistan from India, 1949; and “above all” Eire from Great Britain, 1921 — these are the only examples cited by *La Solution,* its electoral program. By way of contrast, even the Union Nationale's Premier Daniel Johnson saw fit on occasion to cite the self-determination provisions of the constitution of the Soviet Union, as established under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, as a model of multinational state forms!

The PQ program speaks vaguely of nationalizations "when the interest of the national economy demands it," but it proposes no specific nationalizations, and stresses "above all, the creation of new enterprises, of governmental financial reservoirs and management organisms" to guarantee imperialist superprofits.

The PQ leaders seek to extend the *dirigisme* (leading policy-making role) they project for the capitalist state to the working-class organizations, with their call for full state control over trade union membership rights, leadership, recognition as bargaining agents, and conciliation and arbitration procedures.

The PQ's bourgeois character comes through most explicitly in its attitude to the foreign monopolies, *les trusts,* whose domination of the Quebec economy is the main source of the national oppression of the Québécois. The PQ enthusiastically welcomes foreign capital and promises to do everything possible to safeguard its interests and the class relations associated with them in Quebec. The PQ's program explicitly promises the "American corporation" that in office the party will "play the role of any normal government" by ensuring that "violent extremism, continual disorder, very discordant laws and excessive taxation" do not "hinder its operations."

It is this crass pro-imperialism that most clearly distinguishes the bourgeois PQ from the typical petit-bourgeois nationalist formations of colonial and semicolonial countries. In the normal case the existence of indigenous sources of support in the form of a mass petit-bourgeois layer, the peasantry, combined with the relatively small size of the working class and the existence of a national bourgeoisie of some importance, gives the petit-bourgeoisie some flexibility to maneuver against particular imperialist and monopoly capital sectors while in general serving as an agency of imperialism.

A Canadian example of a petit-bourgeois formation was the Social Credit Party in Alberta, which started in the mid-1930s as a farmer-based populist movement with much anticapitalist rhetoric in its program. When in power it evolved toward the right, capitulating to the pressures of the war and then the influx of the oil monopolies until today it is indistinguishable from the traditional bourgeois parties and has, in fact, largely supplanted them.

But in Quebec the rural-based Ralliement des Créditistes still retains many of Social Credit's original features, and the speeches of Ralliement leader Réal Caouette are sprinkled with attacks on monopoly capital. The "radical" anti-monopoly and anti-imperialist aspects of the programs of petit-bourgeois parties reflect the relative exclusion of these layers from the main sectors of the economy, their character as petty commodity producers or professional servitors of the commercial and small capitalist sectors.

> The early Union Nationale reflected the viewpoint of similar layers when it attacked the trusts. Its program in 1936, when it came to office under Duplessis, included such demands as "an end to obstacles to land settlement by the ‘big lumber trusts’; "denunciation and jailing of *canaille* (scoundrel) financiers exploiting public misery"; "handcuffs on the electricity trusts"; "no purchase of government supplies from the coal trust or the Hydro trust"; "honest company laws; no stock manipulations or watering." (No such rhetoric may be found in the PQ program!)

Because they attempt to straddle class lines, nationalist parties are continually beset by internal conflicts between a right wing, based in the bourgeoisie and in the upper layers of the petty bourgeoisie and thus drawn toward imperialism, and a left wing based in the peasant or working-class mass following of the party, whose lower reaches can be attracted to the program of revolutionary socialism. The degree of conflict between these

tendencies depends on the heterogeneity of the party's class composition, and its weight in the nation's political life. As it approaches power, the contradictions sharpen under the direct influence of imperialism and its local agents, and the right wing, which normally dominates the leadership, comes under terrific pressure to drop the anticapitalist planks in its program and dissociate itself more and more from its mass base, even resorting to the violence of the state (if it is in office) to suppress its left wing.

The evolution of Quebec's Union Nationale reveals this trend toward the right but it is indicated also in the PQ's direct predecessor, the Rassemblement pour l'Indépendance Nationale (RIN). An urban nationalist party, the RIN was the leading independentist party until it merged with Lévesque's Mouvement Souveraineté-Association (MSA) to form the Parti Québécois. The history of the RIN was one of continual formation of factions and splits, between a right wing which sought nothing more than bourgeois "independence" along the lines of today's PQ program and an anti-imperialist "left" obsessed with its desires for an alliance with "the national bourgeoisie" which it identified alternately with the Liberals' left wing (Lévesque) and the RIN's right wing.

The transition from the RIN to the PQ was marked programmatically by the disposal of the anti-imperialist aspects of the former's program, and the definitive rupture with its left wing which refused to enter the PQ.

The PQ's bourgeois program and its organizational monolithism show how little flexibility it has. It lacks the maneuverability of the old nationalist parties of the petit-bourgeoisie. The indigenous agricultural base has been destroyed; and the new urban petit-bourgeoisie is largely confined to a client role vis-a-vis imperialism.

The PQ's program on agriculture indicates just how thoroughly it has broken with the traditional rural-based nationalist parties: *La Solution* states baldly that "the rural or semi-rural population is destined to disappear . . . [agriculture] should be based essentially only on big exploitations, each requiring at least as much capital as the average factory."

The PQ seeks nothing more than a slight expansion of the measures undertaken in the celebrated Quiet Revolution to modernize the structures of the provincial capitalist state. "We've already come a long way," is a recurring phrase in its economic program. "Sovereignty" will give it the extra authority

needed for the full exercise of the *"competences"* (a favorite PQ word), the "levers," the "tools," to operate the system.

The Parti Québécois is a bourgeois party presently without the support of any significant sector of the bourgeoisie — French-Canadian, English-Canadian or American. But its program indicates how completely these layers of the Quebec petty bourgeoisie which control the PQ are drawn toward, identify with and depend upon the big bourgeoisie.

The PQ is all the more firmly committed to the bourgeois path because of the petit-bourgeoisie's declining possibility to maneuver between imperialism and the potentially powerful but still inchoate mass working-class movement.

Its strength is not its bourgeois program, but its nationalist appeal. Yet the *indépendantism* of the PQ leadership is not the powerful, self-confident expression of a dynamic new class, but the uneasy, fearful reaction of unstable layers which feel themselves threatened by the growing weight of imperialist interests. Their only refuge is the vulnerable state of Quebec — to which they attribute miraculous redemptive powers with all the pathetic mystification of a petit-bourgeoisie which identifies its dreams with reality. If only they could have their own state to do in the 1970s what their ancestors failed to do in 1837-1838! Alas for them, what was unaccomplished then is impossible now.

If imperialism blocks the petit-bourgeoisie's hopes for a "quiet" bourgeois national revolution, the development of a powerful working class embracing the vast majority of the nation's population offers an alternative ally, which, moreover, has every interest in fighting imperialist domination. But insofar as the working masses are mobilized in the national struggle, they threaten to move against not only foreign capital but also its agents in Quebec, to challenge the entire bourgeois structure.

Unable to see beyond the imperialist reality of today, fearful of its own position, the petit-bourgeoisie dreads the mass movement and does everything it can to confine its own struggle within the narrow limits of the electoralist, parliamentarist machine that is the Parti Québécois. The PQ strenuously tries to assure foreign capital that it is the best block to the mass movement.

PQ not responsible to workers

Its present working-class support gives the PQ what maneuverability it has against the traditional bourgeois parties. (In fact, the PQ's electoral success is largely attributable to the absence of a mass workers party.) But — and this decisively differentiates the PQ from, say, the NDP — the trade unions are not in any way committed to the PQ. They did not create it; they do not finance it; they do not control it; and they have already been led to criticize the party's program while giving it electoral endorsement. To win working-class support and to maintain the sympathy it already has among workers, the PQ may be obliged to promise or undertake some anti-imperialist measures, by taking on one sector of imperialism while all the more firmly committing itself to another. *But it in turn is not responsible to the workers or their trade unions.*

Is a petit-bourgeois leadership capable under any circumstances of conducting a serious struggle against imperialism and the national bourgeoisie? In Cuba, the 26th of July Movement, under a radical petit-bourgeois leadership, led a socialist revolution. But the Castro leadership *began* with a program which, while largely bourgeois-democratic, promised thoroughgoing agrarian reform and industrialization — both demands striking at the root of imperialist and capitalist domination of Cuba. Most significantly, it had a clear understanding that the Batista dictatorship could only be unseated by revolutionary armed struggle which it made a principle in its relations with other groupings. It sought to mobilize and later armed the proletarian masses. Its relative independence of the bourgeoisie enabled it to move to the left under the blows of U.S. reaction to its initial moves against monopolies. Less than a year after coming to power, it had completely broken with the Cuban bourgeoisie politically.

The Parti Québécois is no such movement. If the Cuban example shows us the most exceptional left-wing variant of a petit-bourgeois nationalist leadership, the PQ appears as the most bourgeois, least anti-imperialist of bourgeois nationalist parties. It is responsible to the bourgeoisie, not the working class. It represents above all the political immaturity of the class struggle in Quebec, the lack of political traditions in the French Canadian working class.

The PQ program indicates how thoroughly the party is controlled by its leadership. While the 90,000 members of the PQ are predominantly students, housewives, clerical workers and a scattering of individual trade unionists, its leading cadres are almost without exception men thoroughly committed to the bourgeois outlook — skilled bourgeois politicians, former top civil servants, wealthy professionals, "technocrats" of the state enterprises, journalists and other ideologists for the bourgeoisie.

Most of them are associated directly with the government bureaucracy and organizational structures which have grown up during the last twenty years or so as part of the latest wave of imperialist penetration into Quebec. They are contemptuous of the working class; some were responsible for framing restrictive labor legislation while in the civil service; and the party has already on numerous occasions supported emergency laws to force strikers back to work (police strike, Montreal civic employees, etc.).

Many PQ leaders have long records of faithful service in the traditional bourgeois and petit-bourgeois parties. The PQ leader René Lévesque held several ministerial portfolios in the Liberal cabinet headed by Jean Lesage. PQ deputy leader Gilles Grégoire led a nationalist wing in the federal Social Credit Party's House of Commons deputation. PQ Vice-President Jacques Parizeau was a top economics advisor to both Liberal and Union Nationale regimes, and helped draft much of the present antilabor legislation.

The PQ has already destroyed many who abandoned their own organizations to enter it. This liquidationism was rationalized on the basis of the theory — unfortunately still widely held in the Quebec left — that as a bourgeois party the PQ is a necessary stage in Quebec's liberation struggle. On the other hand, entry was justified by some on the grounds that the PQ might evolve into a labor party or, in power, a workers and farmers government capable of, and undertaking, serious anticapitalist measures.

The first theory is just a re-edition of the discredited "theory of stages" of Menshevism and Stalinism; it is a denial of the leading role of the working class, not to speak of the necessity of the proletarian vanguard party in resolving even the national tasks of the revolution. As for the speculation

that the PQ could evolve into a labor party, everything that is known about this party rules out such a path of development.

Far from evolving toward a labor party, the PQ will tend to harden in the opposite direction. For many years, one of the two major bourgeois parties in Quebec has been identified with a relatively nationalist stance. There is every indication that the Parti Québécois may become the alternative party of the bourgeoisie. The Union Nationale, which has played that role for over thirty years, has now been cut down to its declining rural base, and is probably irretrievably smashed as a result of the April 29 debacle. The PQ's reformist demogogy and base in the urban petit-bourgeoisie makes it a very eligible candidate to succeed the UN.

Thus it is absolutely impermissible for revolutionaries to dissolve themselves into the PQ. To do so is to bury the revolutionary forces, just when they most need to maintain an independent face.

But the PQ includes within the ranks of its members and supporters thousands of workers and youth who are in the first stages of politicization. Thus it contains many elements of the future mass revolutionary party. Some elements in the left have therefore suggested that revolutionists should take a tactical orientation to the PQ and work within it to win forces for the future workers party.

There is nothing in principle to prevent revolutionary socialists working for their ideas and building their own forces in even a bourgeois nationalist party like the PQ so long as they retain their distinct identity and freedom to criticize the party. But the Parti Québécois is in no way an arena for revolutionary action.

Whatever formal democracy the party's structures may appear to have, it is firmly controlled by its petit-bourgeois leadership with their bourgeois outlook. Even at its founding convention, the "left" was soundly defeated and its leading spokesman, former RIN leader Pierre Bourgault, was excluded from the executive slate. Subsequently he was denied nomination in two different ridings before being allowed to contest unsuccessfully the present prime minister's seat. When it appeared that the PQ convention delegates might support a motion calling for a unilingual Quebec, Lévesque intervened and virtually put his job on the line to prevent its passage. Mobilizations of the PQ membership are in general limited to election meetings, county

association meetings (where the petty-bourgeois elements heavily predominate) or the occasional recruitment rally which is usually designed as a comparatively apolitical gala event. The party does not even publish a regular newspaper for the membership.

It is the Lévesque wing which defines the party's character; their views prevail, not those of the tail-ending "leftists" and reformist trade union officials who cling to the PQ's coattails out of their own fear of the mass movement. Insofar as the labor movement mobilizes against capital, it will come into conflict with the PQ.

The PQ is a massive diversion from the revolutionary struggle, an obstacle to the national liberation of the Québécois. The PQ cannot be "reformed." It must be destroyed.

The workers will not be won to the politics of class struggle by unprincipled maneuvers. Revolutionists must maintain complete political and organizational independence of the PQ. This is a precondition for taking the leadership of the mass struggles to come which will confront and expose the PQ for what it is.

For all its strategic limitations, however, the PQ has some measure of tactical flexibility on its left, depending largely on the degree to which the trade union leadership is prepared to play along and give it a plausible left cover. It is not excluded that under the pressure of the mass movement, the PQ might accede to power before the workers, who provide the main thrust in the independence struggle, have succeeded in building their own mass party.

In their book *La Souveraineté et l'Économie,* the PQ leadership has already outlined in some detail their strategy for a "cold" independence — "in order, in moderation, in as rational a framework as possible" — carried off with the support of the English-Canadian and American bourgeoisie in order precisely to head off a mass movement to the left of the PQ which threatened to launch a "suicidal economic war" (as the PQ puts it) against imperialist interests.

But it is doubtful that a PQ government, borne to power on the crest of a powerful mass movement for independence, could maintain the social

stability required by its bourgeois policies without resorting to the most repressive forms of rule — dispensing with parliament, taking measures to suppress the trade unions, etc. Far from being a progressive stage in Quebec's road to national liberation, a PQ government would be a frankly reactionary government.

Tasks of socialists

The essential contradiction of the Parti Québécois is that it has co-opted almost the entire nationalist movement and most of the left, but is completely incapable of responding to the revolutionary challenge posed by the independentist movement. The revolutionary socialists of the Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière are now faced with the responsibility of moving further into the nationalist movement in order to identify with it, defend it, and participate in all its ongoing mass actions to project our program — which presents the only road to a meaningful independence for Quebec, namely, independence in the socialist framework.

We have always identified entirely with the broad nationalist movement, but that movement now becomes a key arena for the work of the LSO. Today the direction of the working class is clearly mapped along the independentist road. The PQ reflects the present political level of the mass independentist sentiment, whose common denominator is as yet not much more than the vague demand for sovereignty. But it would be a serious error to equate the movement for independence with the PQ, which represents more its backward features than its revolutionary potential.

Does an orientation to the nationalist movement at this stage in its political development risk subordinating the revolutionists to the politics of the bourgeoisie and the petit-bourgeoisie? On the contrary, not to get involved in the movement will abandon it to those alien class forces which feed on the confusion spawned by the lack of an independent working-class voice and encouraged by the absence of the revolutionary socialists.

Our main task is to intervene in the movement, to build the revolutionary socialist cadre and to push the independentist thrust along its natural course toward anticapitalist conclusions. The whole logic of development is toward

confrontation with the PQ — through growing conflict between the PQ and the broad labor, student and extra-parliamentary nationalist movement and, within the PQ, between its mass base and the leadership. The most likely perspective for the PQ is a polarization between its right wing which fears the mass movement, and a left wing which reflects the pressure of the mass movement on the PQ; as this pressure builds, it will be accompanied by attempts to build factions, by splits and probably hasty expulsions of the left. The revolutionary socialists must therefore work within the nationalist movement to build the independent class alternative outside the PQ, confronting it, challenging it to act, and providing the vehicle for the leftward-moving forces propelled out of the PQ by the increasingly pro-capitalist policies of its leadership. How long the PQ is able to sustain and capitalize on the mass illusions in its potential as a vehicle for national liberation depends largely on the success of the revolutionists in building a viable, class alternative to the PQ.

The basis for that alternative already exists in the trade unions, the powerful mass organizations of the Québécois working class. Their 600,000 members have already engaged in militant struggles which have brought them into sharp conflict with not only the traditional bourgeois parties and governments, but also the labor policies of the Parti Québécois. Many more confrontations are on the agenda.

Already, the struggles of the labor movement have shown a powerful tendency to overflow the limits of the economic struggle and to seek a political expression. Until recently, the movement toward formation of a Québécois labor party could be clearly discerned.

Has the development of the PQ invalidated this perspective? Not at all. The PQ is simply another revelation of the depth of nationalism and independentist sentiment in the broad layers of the working class. But it also under-scores the failure of the trade unions and the NDP leadership to come to grips with the national question. In this sense the PQ is the direct result of the NDP's hostility toward Quebec's right to self-determination, and to the rotten chauvinism of trade union bureaucrats in English Canada whose comprehension of the Quebec national question has been characterized by demagogic attacks on "separatism" which lack nothing in their resemblance to the similar themes of spokesmen for the ruling class.

But the *objective* forces propelling the trade unions toward independent labor political action remain, even if the PQ detour has delayed their impact for an indeterminate length of time. And so long as the revolutionary socialist forces are small and relatively isolated from the mainstream of the class, the demand for a Quebec labor party retains all its relevance, as a means of popularizing in a realistic way, the need to break from the PQ.

A mass workers party — so necessary to break the Québécois worker from the morass and misleadership of bourgeois and petit-bourgeois politics — will undoubtedly be independentist. And, forged in the struggle against the explicitly bourgeois reformism of the PQ, it can be revolutionary.

Our task is to project a program which exposes the insufficiency of the Parti Québécois and points toward the labor party — the independent party of the trade unions — as the next logical step along the road to the independence of Quebec. This concept that independence of the nation lies through emancipation of the class, and vice versa, may be expressed through the demand: For an Independent, Socialist Quebec, Launch the Labor Party.

If the demand for a labor party retains validity, however, the immediate perspective is postponed. The alliance, albeit temporary and tenuous, of a section of the trade union leadership with the PQ means that the case for a labor party must be posed more than ever in terms of programmatic demands projecting the workers into struggle against the bourgeois politics upheld by the PQ, and in the direction of independent class action, demands around which a new, class-struggle leadership in the unions will be forged. While even a labor party shackled with a reformist program would be a step forward, we must make clear that a mass *revolutionary* party is what is required and what we seek.

Because the demand for an independent Quebec has also been raised by nonworking-class forces for their own reasons, and so far articulated most clearly by them, its revolutionary implications may not be readily apparent to those unaccustomed to the Marxist method of searching out the essential class dynamic in the demand. While the petit-bourgeoisie obscures that dynamic by failing to link it with a consistent program of anti-imperialist, anticapitalist demands, for revolutionaries the demand for independence must be expressed in the demand for an independent, *socialist* Quebec.

The demand for independence, once taken up by the broad forces of the working class, has a powerful logic that can raise all other aspects of the revolutionary program. The demand for an independent, socialist Quebec poses politically what the NDP in English Canada poses organizationally for the class: Who is to rule?— The capitalists and their agents who are completely linked with foreign capital; or the workers, the only ones with a consistent class interest in breaking with the foreign monopolies?

The LSO/LSA 1968 resolution projected our revolutionary program in the framework of the Quebec labor party, which we had every reason then to consider imminent. Consistent with the turn in our orientation, we should now pose that program in the framework of what an independent workers and farmers Quebec will do. In the short run, this tactical presentation of our program can be very useful in describing the difference between our program and the program and actions of the bourgeois Parti Québécois.

How to present the challenge of an independent, socialist Quebec? A few examples will suffice.

The program for an independent socialist Quebec

We demand that French be made the sole official language, the language of instruction in all schools and the language of industry at all levels. If the capitalists won't oblige, let the trade unions or workers councils name plant administrators who speak French and represent the interests of the Québécois nation, to replace the arrogant, chauvinist Anglophone administrators who buttress the rule of their class by trampling on the most elementary national rights of the Québécois.

"Maîtres Chez Nous?' (Masters in Our Own House?) "Sovereignty?" An independent socialist Quebec would institute economic planning in the interests of the Québécois, against the monopolies which plunder our resources to stuff their coffers in the foreign financial capitals of the world. As an essential first step we would move to take over all the key sectors of the foreign industries — which constitute 80 per cent or more of Quebec capital — and put them under workers control. A program to expropriate foreign capitalists might logically develop out of the campaign for nationwide wage parity with Montreal, and wage parity between Quebec workers and their Ontario brothers. Companies which threatened to move out of an independent Quebec would be nationalized.

The petit-bourgeoisie pushes to the fore its demand that Quebec have an independent voice internationally . . . in cultural affairs. An independent foreign policy? By all means. But an independent Quebec must speak out in solidarity with the colonial revolution, with Vietnam, with Cuba and all countries struggling to free themselves from the oppressive grip of U.S. imperialism and its allies. An independent socialist Quebec will favor aid and trade with these countries and all the workers states on the path of socialist development. It will break from the imperialist alliances and ally itself with the anticapitalist bloc.

What does the struggle for independence mean for the future course of relations between the Québécois workers and the workers of English Canada? If the Québécois workers struggle has tended in recent years to develop a tempo of its own, rather than develop in harmony with the earlier pattern of increasing organizational unity with English-Canadian workers, this is due above all to the impact of the national question in Quebec. To the radicalizing effect of national consciousness, has been added the alienation resulting from the failure of the English-Canadian workers movement to defend French Canada's right to self-determination.

Unity between the workers of both nations can come only through struggle, based on a common understanding that the Quebec nation has the right to determine its own future, including the right to separate if it wishes. Now more than ever, our movement must concretize this right within the labor movement by defending the demand of Quebec trade unions for full autonomy within pan-Canadian and international union structures.

Like the Blacks and Chicanos in the United States, the Québécois workers, because of their national oppression, have already shown their capacity to play a vanguard role in the developing struggle for socialism in North America. The developing sentiment for Quebec independence marks another major step forward, by demonstrating a growing awareness among the Québécois workers that they are in no way represented in the existing power structures. Even the vote for the PQ in April 1970 demonstrates in a distorted fashion their willingness to fight for their independence as a class.

As for the revolutionary socialists, by going beyond our defense of self-determination, the keystone of our position on the national

question, to solidarize now with the demand for independence, we lay the essential basis for our intervention in the mass movement in the period ahead. The heirs of the finest traditions and the most advanced theoretical achievements of the international working-class movement, the cadres of the LSO/LSA are destined to play a leading role in the struggles to come. Their ability, unique in the left, to withstand the mass pressure to capitulate to the PQ, testifies to their intransigent adherence to revolutionary principles.

Does our support for an independent Quebec necessitate the formation of a separate Quebec section of the Fourth International? The one does not follow from the other.

Our program for the nation — self-determination (in the case of Quebec political independence) — cannot be confused with our concept of the party — democratic centralist. The Fourth International is not a federation of independent, national parties, but a world party. The interests of the working class are international because the bourgeoisie which it seeks to overthrow is organized on a world scale.

But the bourgeoisie governs through national or multinational states. Thus the key criterion governing the division of our world movement according to distinct sections is the orientation of the struggle in a given area against a single centralized state apparatus. A secondary criterion justifying separate sections is in the case of external colonies where, apart from the obvious difficulties in coordinating the struggle against the imperialist bourgeoisie through one organization embracing the different nationalities, there is little similarity in political structures, historical traditions, etc. because the economy of the oppressed nation is not structurally assimilated into that of the metropolis.

In both Quebec and English Canada, the struggle remains oriented primarily against the Canadian bourgeoisie, English and French, and their central state with its government at Ottawa. As long as Quebec is a part of the Canadian state, it is in the interests of revolutionists in both nations to participate in a single, centralized combat party best able to coordinate our common struggle against a centralizing, imperialist bourgeoisie which dominates both nations and maintains its rule in part by seeking to foster and exploit national differences between the workers of the two nations.

Our support for a single revolutionary party in Canada flows from the experience of our international movement, beginning with the Bolshevik party, a party which succeeded in uniting and mobilizing the workers of many different nationalities oppressed under the czarist autocracy, to carry out the world's first socialist revolution. The Bolsheviks, wrote Trotsky, flatly rejected the national-federation principle in building the party. A revolutionary organ is not the prototype of the future state, but merely the instrument for its creation. An instrument ought to be adapted to fashioning the product; it ought not to include the product. Thus a centralized organization can guarantee the success of revolutionary struggle — even where the task is to destroy the centralized oppression of the nationalities. (*The History of the Russian Revolution,* Ann Arbor edition, Vol. III, pages 37-38.)

The argument here against a federated party applies against a separate party in a nation or a nationality where the struggle is directed against an oppressive state power whose essential political and economic structures encompass the oppressed nation.

The case for a single revolutionary party based on the norms of democratic centralism is strengthened in the case of Quebec by the obvious similarity of political systems, economic structures, and the organizational links which already exist between the workers of both nations.

But the differing tasks and tactical situations faced by comrades in each respective nation require also considerable flexibility in our approach to party structures — especially now when the struggle in Quebec is oriented toward political independence. Within the framework of a single pan-Canadian revolutionary organization, we have made some accommodation to the independent dynamic and needs of the Quebec struggle — through such measures as distinctive names for the movement in each nation, conscious promotion of Francophone cadres in the leadership, a distinct editorial board for our French language journal, joint Political Committee-Montreal Central Committee meetings, special speaking rights for Québécois comrades at conventions on matters concerning Quebec, etc.

Further structural adaptations will no doubt become necessary as the struggle progresses. In particular, there must be constant collaboration and a flow of information and analysis of Quebec developments within the party

leadership. Special emphasis must be placed on strengthening and expanding our French-language press in the next period.

Through combining a sensitive appreciation of the national question with the firmest organizational commitment, we will fulfil our objective of building the strong party necessary to overthrow the centralized rule of the Canadian bourgeoisie and set the workers of both nations on the road to socialism.

Our united forces in both nations have played a vital role in the struggles which have already unfolded in Quebec. The LSO and the Ligue des Jeunes Socialistes intervened actively in the mass movement for a French-only school system, the occupations of the schools and colleges, and the struggle against Bill 63. Our English-Canadian comrades sponsored a cross-country tour for Raymond Lemieux, the leader of the Ligue pour 1' Intégration Scolaire, and have fought consistently in defense of Quebec's rights within the NDP. Comrades in both nations have been outspoken defenders of Quebec's political prisoners.

If the struggle on the political plane appears stalemated temporarily by the rise of the PQ, the very explosiveness of Quebec's social contradictions ensures that the next period will continue to be characterized by a series of far-reaching mobilizations in the extra-parliamentary arena, although often related to events in the national assembly, like the struggle against Bill 63. Our movement must be geared to intervene in those movements as a dynamic independent tendency armed with its own program of transitional demands.

Insofar as the PQ feels obliged to participate in these movements in order not to lose contact with its mass base, this will necessarily mean working in a united front with hostile class forces. Already, the LSO has taken a turn in this direction with its intervention in the Front d'Action Politique (FRAP) in Montreal, a broad grouping of trade unions, *péquistes* (PQers), citizens' committees and left organizations aiming to contest the forth-coming municipal elections.

Revolutionists can identify with and work in such multi-class alliances so long as the workers organizations, including the trade unions and our own organization, have complete political and organizational freedom, including the right to criticize publicly the line of the other organizations in the alliance.

As the struggle in Quebec moves onto a qualitatively higher plane, its defense in English Canada assumes a greater importance in the work of the League for Socialist Action and the Young Socialists. Our solidarity with the powerful anticapitalist demands of the Quebec movement will popularize many aspects of our general revolutionary program, not least our call for a workers government in English Canada.

The international dimension

The national struggle in Quebec is part of a world-wide phenomenon. Scarcely a single one of the leading capitalist countries today is untouched by the development of powerful nationalist movements among oppressed peoples within its own borders. This development, unforeseen by Marx, was partly anticipated in Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution. That theory, reaffirmed in practice many times over, projects the possibility for relatively backward nations to pass over directly to socialism resolving through workers power the traditional bourgeois tasks of independence, agrarian revolution, etc

The reverse side of the coin of permanent revolution, as it were, is that the delay of socialist revolution in the advanced imperialist countries has, in the epoch of imperialism, brought about a revival and resurgence of nationalist tendencies among peoples whose national character was thought to have been suppressed for all time by ascendant capitalism. Because those oppressed nationalities and nations are overwhelmingly proletarian, their struggles have a powerful dynamic of their own which adds a significant new dimension to the class struggle in the entire country.

Quebec has maintained its national identity over a continuous history of centuries of domination by foreign powers — the Québécois are the only one of the original European peoples who colonized the Western hemisphere never to have won even formal political independence.

Today, the rise of a powerful nationalist sentiment and the independentist movement in this nation with its own territory, language, customs, historical traditions — and above all a skilled proletariat — has put socialist revolution on the agenda in a major sector of the Canadian state and of the North American capitalist economy.

Quebec's strategic geographical and economic position means that its revolution, at once national and socialist, has a powerful radicalizing effect on the workers in English Canada, and is thereby a big step forward toward the overthrow of capitalism on the entire continent.

This international aspect of the struggle has always guided our perspectives. Marx fought for Ireland's independence, but added that after separation (from England) might come federation. The Communist International of Lenin and Trotsky advanced the slogan For a United Socialist States of Europe to concretize the form of relations it envisaged between workers states following the extension of the Russian revolution to Western Europe.

If the advanced workers of Quebec have shown their fighting capacity by inscribing the demand for political independence on their banners, there is every reason for an independent, workers Quebec to link its struggle with that of the workers of all North America, around a similar concept. Thus, to René Lévesque's proposition of separation then a capitalist common market which will retain Quebec's oppression, the socialists counterpose the United Socialist States of North America — a free Quebec in a socialist world.